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AUTHOR Dinh, Khanh T.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the quality of parent-child relationships in Asian-American families and its association with various aspects of acculturation. Participants were 173 Asian-American undergraduates who had at least one parent in the study. The results show that acculturation factors, in particular acculturation conflict between parents and children, statistically predicted children's reports of the quality of parent-child relationships. Although statistically less significant, certain acculturation factors also predicted parents' reports of the quality of parent-child relationships. These findings point to the need for assessing the characteristics of multiple family members when investigating the role acculturation plays in parent-child relationships and how that may differ for parents and children. As it turned out, acculturation conflict was the key variable in determining the quality of parent-child relationships in Asian-American families. (Author/SLD)

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Parent-Child Relationships and Acculturation Conflict in Asian-American Families

Khanh T. Dinh[1], Barbara R. Sarason, & Irwin G. Sarason

University of Washington

This study investigates the quality of parent-child relationships in Asian-American families and its association with various aspects of acculturation. Participants were 173 Asian-American undergraduates who had at least one parent in the study. The results showed that acculturation factors, particularly acculturation conflict between parents and children, significantly predicted children's reports of the quality of parent-child relationships. Although statistically less significant, certain acculturation factors also predicted parents' reports of the quality of parent-child relationships. These findings point to the need for assessing characteristics of multiple family members when investigating the role acculturation plays in parent-child relationships and how that may differ for parents and children. As it turned out, acculturation conflict was the key variable in determining the quality of parent-child relationships in Asian-American families.

Presently, Asian immigrants compose the second largest incoming group to the United States and have dramatically changed the demographics of Asian-Americans in this country. The majority of Asian-Americans are first generation immigrants. Upon their entrance, family members acculturate at different rates and in different ways. Children, depending on their age of entry, may quickly acquire the English language and adopt Western ways of thinking and behaving, while their parents tend to maintain traditional Asian values and language. As a result, generational gaps or acculturation conflicts may occur between parents and children, which consequently may affect the quality of family relationships and satisfaction with these relationships. The present study investigates both parents' and children's reports of the quality of parent-child relationships and their associations with various characteristics of parents' and children's acculturation. A particular variable of interest in this study is acculturation conflict between parents and children.

Method

Participants were 173 (64% female) Asian-American undergraduates from the University of Washington who had at least one parent in the study. The ethnic distribution among the students included 25% Chinese, 19% Vietnamese, 14% Filipino, 15% mixed Asian, 10% Korean, and 17% other Asian ethnic groups combined. One-hundred-fifty-four mothers (31% Chinese, 17% Vietnamese, 16% Filipino, 14% Japanese, 11% Korean, and 11% other Asian ethnic groups

[1]Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Khanh T. Dinh, University of Washington, Department of Psychology, Box 351525, Seattle, WA 98195-1525 or E-Mail: KDINH@eclinkFHCRC.ORG. This paper was presented at the 104th American Psychological Association Convention, Toronto, Canada, 1996.

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combined) and 122 fathers (31% Chinese, 16% Vietnamese, 14% Filipino, 12% Korean, and 27% other Asian ethnic groups combined) also participated in the study. Students were recruited from introductory psychology courses and received research credits for their participation. In small groups, students met with an experimenter to complete questionnaires which assessed demographic information, the quality of parent-child relationships (the dimensions of support, acceptance, and conflict), satisfaction with parent-child relationships, and various aspects of acculturation which included acculturation conflict, cultural identity, traditional family values, and generational status. Acculturation conflict was based on two questionnaire items: (1) whether students feel that their parents think they are too Americanized and (2) whether students feel that their parents are too traditional. Responses for these items were based on a 4-point Likert-type format ranging from "not at all" to "a lot." In regards to data collection from parents, a small packet of questionnaires (with a returned-stamped envelope) was sent to each parent who agreed to participate in the study. These questionnaires assessed the quality of parent-child relationships, acculturation conflict, cultural identity, traditional family values, and demographic information. Regarding acculturation conflict, each parent was asked whether they feel that their child is too Americanized. Responses for this question were based on the same scale as the one used for students.

Results

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to predict separately parents' and children's reports of the quality of parent-child relationships from parents' and children's acculturation factors. The results showed that both parents' and children acculturation significantly predicted children's reports of the quality of parent-child relationships in the dimensions of support, acceptance, and conflict. For example, after accounting for parents' education (entered in block 1), parents' and children's acculturation measures (entered in block 2), particularly acculturation conflict and cultural identity, predicted unique variance (R^2_{change} = .31, $p < .001$) for parent-child relationships' conflict (R^2_{total} = .32, $F(12,140) = 5.55$, $p < .001$). For parents' reports of the quality of parent-child relationships, after accounting for parents' education, parents' and children's acculturation measures, particularly acculturation conflict and traditional family values, significantly predicted only the dimension of conflict (R^2_{total} = .17,

$F(12,140) = 2.43$, $p < .01$). The same regression analysis was also performed to predict children's reports of their satisfaction with parent-child relationships. The results showed that after accounting for parents' education, parents' and children's acculturation measures, particularly acculturation conflict and generational status, predicted unique variance ($R^2_{change} = .34$, $p < .001$) for children's satisfaction with parent-child relationships ($R^2_{total} = .37$, $F(12,140) = 6.56$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the importance of assessing both parents' and children's acculturation when investigating the quality of parent-child relationships. Attending to both parents' and children's perspectives provided a fuller picture of Asian-American families. Acculturation measures, especially acculturation conflict between parents and children, significantly predicted children's reports of the quality of parent-child relationships and satisfaction with these relationships. Similar results were found only for parents' reports of the dimension of conflict in parent-child relationships. In summary, this provides further information for both researchers and clinicians by pointing to the relevant role of acculturation conflict between parents and children and its impact on the quality of parent-child relationships for Asian-Americans.